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## MUSICAL ACCENT AND DOUBLE ALLITERATION IN THE *EDDA*

In Paul and Braune's *Beiträge*, XXXIII, pp. 95 ff., there appeared an article by B. Q. Morgan, "Zur Lehre von der Alliteration in der Westgermanischen Dichtung."<sup>1</sup> This is an investigation of the relation between the alliteration and the musical accent of the line. The author finds from a study of *Beowulf* that each half-line contains a leading musical pitch which he designates as "führton." By this is not meant any fixed musical note, but a pitch which is to be determined separately for each line by the reader's natural feeling. If two accented syllables in the same half-line have the same "führton," i. e., if they are on the same musical pitch, he calls them "gleichtonig." Any tone which varies from the "führton" he calls "ausweichton" and distinguishes two degrees of the same, "nahton" and "fernton," according to the remoteness from the "führton." Morgan deduces from his results the following rule: "Hebungen mit führton müssen alliterieren, hebungen mit nahton dürfen alliterieren, müssen es aber nicht; hebungen mit fernton sind von der alliteration mit hebungen anderer tonstufe ausgeschlossen." This new rule is intended to supplement or even supersede the old rule of rhythmical stress accent laid down by Sievers (*Altgermanische Metrik*, § 30, 1).

It is not my purpose to try either to verify or to disprove any part of Morgan's work, which seems to be a very accurate and painstaking investigation. But I have been interested in seeing whether his rule can be applied to the North Germanic poetry; and for this purpose I have read the *Vǫluspá*, *Thrymskviða*, *Hymiskviða*, and *Baldurs Draumar*, trying in the case of each half-line to see whether, according to my natural feeling, the two accented syllables were on the same musical pitch or not; and this entirely regardless of whether they were first-half or second-half

<sup>1</sup>A paper on the same subject was read by Morgan before the Modern Language Association in Columbus, O., on December 28, 1907.

lines, or whether the alliteration was single or double. I must confess that I am a little skeptical about a study of this kind, particularly if one starts out with a preconceived opinion as to the intonation with which a certain line ought to be read. It seems that some lines can be read (always of course in the context) on either a high or a low equal pitch ("gleichton"), or even with a varying pitch ("ausweichton"), and one about as naturally as another.

Again, it is not always easy for the ear to detect whether two syllables are on the same pitch or no; sometimes a strong stress accent can be mistaken for a change of pitch, when on more careful examination it will turn out that such is not the case; similarly, the inflection of the voice on an unaccented syllable of a polysyllabic word is often misleading, in cases where the two accented syllables of the half-line are on the same pitch. Those lines which seemed capable of two or more intonations I have studied carefully, called in the help of another, and have tried always to decide in favor of the reading which seemed most natural. Of course it is hard to be natural when observing oneself so closely. I have set about my task with an entirely unprejudiced mind, or if anything, rather with the expectation that my results would agree with Morgan's.

He finds that of the 1,542 first half-lines in *Beowulf* which show double alliteration 1,486 are on the same musical pitch; that of the 1,582 first half-lines with single alliteration 1,550 are not on the same pitch; furthermore, of the last half-lines (in which, as is known, there is always only one alliterating word) he finds only 42 which can be read on the same pitch. These proportions are of course sufficient to justify him in deducing his rule that accented syllables of the same pitch can alliterate, others not. The following are my results for the *Vǫluspá*. (I omitted those strophes which contain only a list of proper names, and repeated lines were counted only once.) Of the 195 first half-lines in which the two arses are on the same pitch, only 78 have double alliteration, and of the 30 with varying pitch, 17 have also double alliteration. Thus it will be seen that here only 40 per cent. of the lines with "gleichton" show double alliteration, whereas nearly

56 per cent. of those with "ausweichton" also have double alliteration. On the other hand, I find that 77 per cent. of the last half-lines are to be read with "gleichton" of the two stressed syllables. I do not mean to assert that the converse of Morgan's rule will apply to the *Edda*, but only that these figures do not permit its application to this poem at least. And of course I have the same right to suppose that my natural intonation of these lines will coincide with that of most readers, as has Morgan to make this supposition for *Beowulf*.

The figures in the case of the other poems are in some respects even more extreme than for the *Völuspá*. In the *Thrymskviða*, of the 77 first half-lines with even pitch, only 19 have double alliteration, i. e., only 24 per cent.; and of the 30 with varying pitch 5 have double alliteration. On the other hand, in the last half-lines I read with even pitch 65 of the 107, or over 60 per cent. (here again lines repeated in the poem were counted only once).<sup>1</sup>

As regards those lines not on an even pitch and yet with double alliteration, it might be suggested by someone that the difference in pitch is not so great as to preclude the alliteration. But I have not been able to carry out Morgan's distinction between "nahton" and "fernton," and furthermore, I am of the opinion that a very great degree of difference in pitch would not prevent alliteration. This is certainly true of alliteration between half-lines. Very often the alliterating word of the second half-line is clearly far removed in pitch from that of the first half-line. And it is this variation in pitch between the half-lines and adjoining full-lines rather than the variation within the half-line, that keeps the reading from being monotonous. Morgan says on p. 97: "Es scheint aber, als lägen auch die führttöne der beiden halbzeilen

<sup>1</sup> *Hymiskviða*: First half-line with even pitch, 109, with uneven pitch, 43; second half-line with even pitch, 96, with uneven pitch, 56; even pitch and double alliteration, 40; uneven pitch and double alliteration, 22.

*Baldur's Draumar*: First half-line with even pitch, 40, with uneven pitch, 11; second half-line with even pitch, 38, with uneven pitch, 13; even pitch and double alliteration, 10; uneven pitch and double alliteration, 0.

It did not seem advisable or necessary to burden this short article with a list of all of the lines, indicating the musical accent of each. If anyone should desire the figures they can be had upon request. I believe that anyone who will experiment for himself with a few strophes of these poems will notice that a majority of the half-lines are read with even pitch of the arses, regardless of double alliteration.

eines langverses innerhalb derselben zone." I have not tested this for *Beowulf*, but it does not seem to hold good generally for these poems of the *Edda*. On the contrary, a marked difference in the pitch of the alliterating words of the two half-lines would be quite parallel to a strong stress-accent, i. e., it would make the words stand out clearly in the general intonation of the whole line and render them particularly suitable for bearing the alliteration. E. g., str. 17 of the *Thrymskv.*:

Mik mono æsir | argan kalla.

the voice rises for the word "argan." Here, as generally, the musical and stress-accent fall on the same word, "argan," and the former simply accentuates the latter. There are half-lines, however, in which the alliterating word is followed by one which bears a stronger stress accent, e. g.:

*Thrymskv.* 5: pá fló Loki | fjaðrhamr dunþe,

*Thrymskv.* 15: bindom Þór pá | brúðar líne,

*Thrymskv.* 30: berep inn hamar | brúpe at vígja.

In these lines the nouns "Loki," "Þór," and "hamar" have according to the sense a stronger rhythmical accent, but the preceding alliterating verbs have a much higher musical pitch; and in each case the alliterating word of the second half-line lies on a very low pitch. It seems that this very difference in musical accent is the element which satisfied the poet's feeling for the alliteration. Or perhaps we shall have to say that the high musical pitch added to whatever stress-accent the word has in the line would be sufficient to make this word stand out more prominently than the word with the stronger stress-accent.<sup>1</sup>

Is it not true then that in some cases in the *Edda* there seems to be a relation between alliteration and change of pitch, rather than as Morgan finds for *Beowulf*, between alliteration and "gleichton"? At any rate the Norse poets do not seem to have felt that every pair of equal musical pitches had to alliterate, nor on the other hand that words of a different pitch could not be thus joined together. His statement (p. 98) that: "ist der tonabstand

<sup>1</sup> Cf. J. W. Bright, *Publications of the Modern Language Association of America*, Vol. XIV, new series, Vol. VII, 1899, pp. 345 ff.

zweier hebungen sehr gross, so wäre deren bindung durch alliteration geradezu stilwidrig, weil diese gewaltsam zusammenbringen würde, was sonst getrennt ist," cannot, I believe, be applied to the *Edda*.

As to the verse types, Morgan thinks that he can find in the musical accent an explanation of the fact that the B and C types so seldom have double alliteration. He says (p. 96), "dass die zweite hebung von B gern im tone ausweicht und bei C fällt der tonsprung zwischen erster und zweiter hebung meist noch viel deutlicher ins ohr." Now in the *Vǫluspá* I find that in only 3 of the 39 B-type verses and in only 28 of the 132 C-type verses are the two stresses of the half-line to be read on a different pitch; in by far the larger part then they are on the same pitch. I doubt whether the musical intonation will throw any light on the relation between verse types and double alliteration.

To what is all this difference between the *Beowulf* and the *Edda* to be attributed? Is it due solely to the fact that two persons carried on the investigations? Is this musical intonation purely a personal matter, or is one justified in assuming that most readers will give the lines practically the same musical as well as stress-accent? If the latter be the case then we are confronted with the problem: Why is the number of lines with even pitch so much greater in the *Edda* than in the *Beowulf*? I thought at first that the answer in the case of the *Vǫluspá* was to be found in the fact that this whole poem consists of the solemn narrative of the prophetess, in which we might expect to find a high even pitch sustained. But the figures are not materially different for the others, poems full of action. It seems to me that the solution is rather to be sought in the difference in style of *Beowulf* and the *Edda*. As is well known (cf. Sievers, *Altgermanische Metrik*, §30c) the running-over of one long line into the next is characteristic of the West Germanic stichic verse. The tendency to end a sentence with the first half-line and begin a new one with the second half-line is very marked in the Anglo-Saxon poetry. The epic variation is one of the most important devices by which the poet maintains this style. If the sentence would naturally end with the long line he carries it over through the

first half of the next line by adding one of those parenthetical or appositional phrases which simply emphasize what has already been said without advancing the narrative.

But in the strophic poetry of the *Edda* the long line developed as the unit, and we generally find the sentence ending with the last half-line, with no pause at all or only a slight one after the first half. The epic variation so common in *Beowulf* is very rare in the *Edda*. The apposition or parallelism which does occur is generally between two long-lines, each being a complete unit. E.g., *Thrymskv.* 14:

Senn vǫro æsir | aller á þinge  
ok ósynjor | allar á male,

or in Strophe 4:

Mendak gefa þér | þótt ór golle være  
ok þó selja | at ór silfre være.

But there is not even a great deal of this sort of variation. The poet does not linger and comment on a situation or an act as in *Beowulf*, but rushes on with his narrative. Now where there is no syntactical break at the end of the first half-line the voice would naturally show a tendency to sustain on the second arsis the pitch of the first in its effort to rush on and finish the sentence:<sup>1</sup> e.g., in *Thrymskv.* 26:

Sat en alsnotra | ambott fyrer,

or Strophe 21:

Senn vǫro hafrar | heim of rekner,

or 16:

Lǫtom und hómom | hrynja lukla,

or 7:

Hefr þu Hlórípa | hamar of folgenn?

In all these the two stressed syllables of the first half-line seem to be on the same musical pitch. Morgan does not seem to me to

<sup>1</sup> This would also apply to those second half-lines in which the sentence runs over into the following line.

be right when he says of such lines (p. 102): "die leise erregtheit des vortrags hindert den gleichton." Of course some lines of this kind show varying pitch, but this is generally due to some special emphasis of a word, e. g., *Thrymskv.* 10:

seg þú á lopte | lǫng tipende.

Where "lopte" is on a high pitch, the thought being, "tell me while still in the air; do not wait to alight." But these are exceptional cases. In general the pitch of the two stressed syllables will be practically the same. So we may say that if it be true that the *Edda* contains a greater number of half-lines with equal pitch than *Beowulf*, this fact may be due partly to the closer syntactical unity of the full line in the *Edda*.

There is a further explanation of this preponderance of even pitch in the *Edda* (and this will apply to both the first and second half-lines). As remarked above, the musical and stress accents generally coincide, i. e., a stronger stress accent is likely to be accompanied by a change in pitch, generally a rise of the voice; and if the two accented syllables of a half-line have the same stress accent they will generally be on the same pitch. In such cases we have to do with two strongly stressed syllables, and since they must be uttered on some pitch or other, if the two be on the same pitch we are hardly justified in speaking of a musical accent at all, the essential element of which is a change in pitch. Of course it is perfectly plausible to speak of two syllables as being on the same pitch, but this is a statement which one arrives at after it has been observed through a *difference* in the pitch of two syllables that musical accent is something which exists apart from dynamic accent. So long as we deal solely with stressed syllables of the same pitch the idea of a musical accent does not occur to us. In the case of those half-lines, then, in which the two accented syllables are on the same pitch, we can in a certain sense eliminate the conception of a musical accent and say that the dynamic accent predominates.

Now, if it be true that *Beowulf* contains many more half-lines with varying pitch than the *Edda*, i. e., if the musical accent plays a very important rôle in the former, while in the latter the dynamic



accent is the predominating one, this is quite in accord with the characteristic styles of the Anglo-Saxon and Scandinavian poetry. Hoffmann ("Der bildliche Ausdruck in *Beowulf* und in der *Edda*," *Englische Studien*, VI, 163-216), was the first to call attention to the fact that the *Beowulf* poet strives constantly to appeal to the emotions of the reader or listener, whereas in the *Edda* the appeal is chiefly to the intellect and the imagination. Now we know (cf. Hempl, *German Orthography and Phonology*, p. 165) that emotion effects a change in the tension of the muscles, which results in a change of the pitch of the voice. Musical accent is the natural accompaniment and symbol of emotional activity. On the other hand, "that idea that most keenly busies the mind is expressed with most vigor, or stress of the voice." Thus stress accent is the natural accompaniment and symbol of mental activity. It is only to be expected then, that in the *Beowulf* the pitch accent would predominate, in the *Edda* the dynamic.

Whatever may be the status of musical accent in the *Beowulf* and in the *Edda*, the fact remains that double alliteration occurs much less frequently in the latter: *Beowulf*, about 50 per cent.; *Vǫluspá*, 45 per cent.; *Thrymskv.* 24 per cent.; *Hymis Kviða*, 38 per cent.; *Baldrs Draumar*, 18 per cent.; *Helga Kviða Hundingsbana*, I and II, 25 per cent.; *Rigsbula*, 30 per cent.; *Hyndhuljóð*, 30 per cent.; *Vǫl en Skamma*, 13 per cent. Only poems in fornyrðislag strophe can well be compared with *Beowulf*. This too may be due partly to the more highly developed unity of the long-line as opposed to the Anglo-Saxon half-line and the running-over of the last half into the first half of the next line. In the *Edda* where the two half-lines are bound closely together syntactically; where the sentence generally begins with the first half-line and ends with the second, and the two half-lines are not separated by any pause or at most by only a slight one, the ear is satisfied by one alliterating word in each half-line. The poet did not feel any great need of a double alliteration. But where, as is frequent in *Beowulf*, the two parts of the long-line are separated by strong punctuation (period, colon, or semicolon, so called "closed" half-lines) and by a marked pause of the voice; where the first half-line is often very closely connected syntacti-

cally with the preceding line and not at all with its own last half-line, then a double alliteration in this first half is almost necessary in order to produce the desired effect for the ear. If the line is split between two sentences then it must be held together more closely by a clear, well-marked alliteration.

This agrees very well with Morgan's figures for *Beowulf*. He finds that 471 of the 646 closed first half-lines show double alliteration, but he associates the phenomenon only with their even pitch. It cannot of course be affirmed that single alliteration occurs only in the open first half-lines and double in the closed (for the *Edda* contains very few closed first half-lines); only that the closed type would be very favorable to the development of double alliteration and the open, on the other hand, would be satisfied with a single. It is true, however, that in the *Edda*, whenever a first half-line is more closely connected grammatically with the preceding line than with its own last half-line, and in the few cases of epic variation we generally find double alliteration. This is particularly noticeable in the *Vǫluspá* in which double alliteration is almost as frequent as in *Beowulf*. E.g., Strophe 27:

á sér ausask | aurgom forse,  
vepe Valfǫr. | Vitǫ enn eða hvat?

Strophe 28:

Ein sat úte, | þas aldenn kom  
yggjongr asa, | ok í augo leit.

Strophe 32:

Varp af meipe, | es mæR sýndesk,  
harmflaug hættleg; | Höpr nam skjóta.

or with epic variation, Strophe 9:

Gengo regen ǫll | á rǫkstóla,  
ginnheilög goð, | ok of þat gættosk:

Let me say again that this article is not intended as a polemic

against Morgan's work. It would in no sense be fair to condemn his work in *Beowulf* by testing his theory on the *Edda*. Nor am I perhaps justified in generalizing for the whole *Edda*, my results obtained from examining only four poems. I only affirm that Morgan's theory of the relation between double alliteration and musical accent cannot be applied generally to Scandinavian alliterative poetry.

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